

REMARKS

Applicants have amended the claims in order to reduce the initial filing fee by deleting the multiple dependent claims from the application. Applicants retain the right to reintroduce any subject matter canceled by the present Amendment at any time during the prosecution of this application or any further application claiming benefit of this application.

Applicants have amended the application to substitute the originally filed pages 30 - 34 with the amended pages 30 - 34 attached to the International Preliminary Examiner Report (Annexes) and included in the application as filed herewith. Also, an Abstract of the Disclosure has been added to the application.

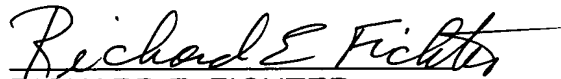
Applicants are submitting herewith a copy of the Search Report which issued on International Application No. pct/gb00/00571, of which the present application is the U.S. national phase. All of the publications cited in the International Search Report are listed on the attached Form PTO-1449. It is Applicants' understanding that, under the procedures of the PCT, copies of the cited publications will have been supplied to the U.S. Patent Office by the International Bureau. However, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned attorney if additional copies are necessary or would facilitate examination of the present application.

Otherwise, the Examiner is respectfully requested to return an initialed and dated copy of the attached Form PTO-1449 to confirm that all publications listed thereon have been considered and made officially of record in the file of this application.

Applicants understand that, under the procedures of the PCT, a copy of the priority document (GB 9904269.9, filed 24 February 1999) will have been supplied to the U.S. Patent Office pursuant to Rule 17 of the PCT Regulations. It is therefore respectfully requested that the first Official Action in the present application contain an indication that the appropriate priority document is in the file of this application.

In view of the above amendments, an early action on the application is now in order and is most respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,
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Marked-Up Version Showing Changes Made

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please replace claims 3-5, 9-11, 13-16, 18, 20-22 and 27 with the following amended claims.

3(Amended). A process as claimed in claim 1 [or claim 2], wherein the aluminium containing compound comprises aluminium chloride, aluminium nitrate, aluminium sulphate, alumina and/or boehmite.

4(Amended). A process as claimed in [any one of the preceding claims] claim 1, wherein the barium containing compound comprises barium chloride, barium sulphate and/or barium nitrate.

5(Amended). A process as claimed in [any one of the preceding claims] claim 1, wherein the mixture comprising aluminium and barium containing compounds is in the form of a substantially homogeneous precipitate.

9(Amended). A process as claimed in [any one of claims 6 to 8] claim 6, wherein the salt solution further includes a dispersant, such as polyvinylpyrrolidone.

10(Amended). A process as claimed in [any one of claims 1 to 4] claim 1, wherein the mixture in step (a) is formed by adding a solution comprising oxalic acid and a water soluble barium compound, preferably barium nitrate, to an aqueous slurry comprising boehmite.

11(Amended). A process as claimed in [any one of the preceding claims] claim 1, wherein heating of the mixture in step (b) is achieved by a hydrothermal process.

13(Amended). A process as claimed in claim 11 [or claim 12], wherein the hydrothermal treatment is carried out at a pressure in the range of from 1 to 150 bar, preferably from 5 to 50 bar.

14(Amended). A process as claimed in [any one of claims 11 to 13] claim 11, wherein the hydrothermal treatment is carried out for a time in the range of from 30 minutes to 25 hours, preferably from 1 to 10 hours.

15(Amended). A process as claimed in [any one of claims 1 to 10] claim 1, wherein the mixture in step (b) is heated at a temperature in the range of from ambient temperature to boiling temperature, preferably by a reflux process.

16(Amended). A process for the preparation of a stabilized alumina catalyst support material, which process comprises the steps of:

(i) providing a precursor material comprising particles of boehmite at least partially coated with a layer comprising a compound of barium, wherein the precursor material is produced according to a process as claimed in [any one of claims 1 to 15] claim 1; and

(ii) heating the coated particles of boehmite to a temperature at which least some of the boehmite transforms to gamma-alumina.

18(Amended). A process for the preparation of an automotive catalytic converter, which process comprises the steps of:

(i) providing a precursor material comprising particles of boehmite at least partially coated with a layer comprising a compound of barium, wherein the precursor material is produced according to a process as claimed in [any one of claims 1 to 15] claim 1;

(ii) dispersing a mixture comprising said precursor material on a metal or ceramic monolithic substrate; and

(iii) heating said mixture comprising said precursor material to a temperature at which at least some of the boehmite transforms to gamma-alumina.

20(Amended). A process as claimed in claim 16 [or claim 18], wherein heating is carried out at a temperature in the range of from 500 to 1000°C.

21(Amended). A process as claimed in claim 17 [or claim 19], wherein the further heating is carried out at a temperature in the range of from 1000 to 1400°C.

22(Amended). A process for the preparation of a catalyst, such as an automotive catalytic converter, which process comprises the step of dispersing a stabilized alumina catalyst support material prepared according to the process of claim 16 [or claim 17] on a metal or ceramic monolithic substrate.

27(Amended). A stabilized alumina catalyst carrier or support material as claimed in claim 25 [or claim 26] having a specific surface area of at least 31 m²/g after exposure to a temperature of 1400°C 1 hour.

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